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NEWS RELEASE

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Nethercutt ecoterrorism penalties included in bioterrorism security bill signed by Bush

WASHINGTON – Today U.S. Rep. George Nethercutt (R-Wash.) hailed language included in the bioterror security bill signed into law by President Bush as another step toward halting eco-terrorists.

"There is a difference between environmental activism and environmental terrorism," Nethercutt said. "Protest is a mode of free expression that is every person's constitutional right, but destruction of property in the name of a cause is terrorism. Destroying research facilities -- facilities that do work to improve the lives of humans and animals -- creates a disincentive to do research and wastes taxpayers' money. This law takes another step toward staking out the difference between peaceful protesters and terrorists."

The Bioterrorism Preparedness Act of 2001, H.R. 3448, as signed by the president, includes language Nethercutt authored targeting ecoterrorism. At a hearing in February, the FBI identified ecoterrorists as the most dangerous domestic terrorism source. The Earth Liberation Front alone has claimed responsibility for more than \$40 million in property damage since 1997, and together with its partner organization, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), claimed responsibility for 137 crimes, including vandalism and arson, during 2001 alone.

The law increases penalties on eco-terrorists for damage to property, including animals or records. Violators are now subject to restitution for **all** economic damage resulting from their crimes, and will be subject to life imprisonment for crimes that lead to the death of a person.

The law also adopts Nethercutt's strategy of hardening research universities against terrorism, and authorizes grants to support reviews of security standards and practices. Associations representing food producers are also eligible for grants for educational programs to teach farmers how to protect themselves from attack.

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Nethercutt eco-terrorism penalties included in bioterrorism security bill passed by House

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"This law is a significant step forward, but we must go farther to root out eco-terrorists," Nethercutt said of the new law.

Legislation previously introduced by Nethercutt would go farther to stop and prevent eco-terrorism. A key provision in H.R. 2795, The Agroterrorism Prevention Act of 2001, would allow the FBI to investigate crimes under the Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organizations Act, and establish an incident clearinghouse to strengthen local law enforcement efforts.

"This provision is really key to finding and stopping those who commit these crimes," Nethercutt said. "I'm hopeful this measure will be passed later this year. Strengthening penalties is important, but my bill would empower law enforcement to prevent future terrorism."

Nethercutt's legislation would also broaden definitions of research, to protect both animal *and* plant researchers from terrorism.

Nethercutt testified before the House Resources Subcommittee on Forests and Forest Health, in February, explaining the need for this legislation in Washington state.

"Agriculture, forestry and science have been under attack in Washington state for years, and constituents have long expressed their concerns with criminal activity that threatens both their lives and their livelihood," he testified. "I met with one scientist recently who told me she has been physically threatened by radicals and fears for her safety. 'Yet all I want to do is cure breast cancer,' she says. The eco-terrorists' actions show they place no value on human or animal lives."

"It's time that we draw a line in the sand and let eco-terrorists know, we will not stand for terrorism of any kind in our homeland."

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